

Everyone here today has a certain pastime or hobby that brings satisfaction and joy. If I were to ask Dan Jacobs what really brought him peace and satisfaction away from this fast-paced troublesome world, he would probably have said to me, "Wandering around in my garden." Even when Dan was sick, he had his son Brady put in a garden so, he could watch over it and tend it. He'd be out there in his chair, moving it ahead as he tended to a plant in the Garden. His little grandson Colin viewed every apple he saw in the store, as having come from Papa Dypes tree. In fact, not too long ago, Dan told Brady, he wanted to expand the garden next year. But unfortunately, something called sickness and death interfered with these plans. In addition, no unprotected outside garden can survive a Michigan winter. But let me tell you, Jesus Christ has already expanded the Garden for Dan. Jesus Christ has provided Dan with a place where he can experience a Garden that isn't affected by death, disease or a harsh Michigan winter. Let's follow Dan today and Wander around in an Eternal Garden.

Our text was written by the prophet Isaiah who lived about 700 years before Christ. He witnessed to an Israelite nation who had, by in large, rejected God. God was fed up with the Israelites and was going to punish them. Still he had kept a small group of Israelites faithful to him. To these believers God spoke words of comfort. Though they were surrounded by the wicked and their land was about to be run over by the Assyrians and then later the Babylonians, God had something wonderful planned for them. He said: "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth" God was looking far into the future, to a time when his Son returns to judge the world. After the believers have been separated from the unbelievers, Jesus will make a new heaven and a new earth. No, after Judgment Day, heaven will not be in the heavens anymore. "Heaven," the place where glorified believers will live forever with God, will be a new earth with a new sky. Contrary to the pictures you've seen, you probably won't be sitting around on a cloud playing a harp in eternity; you're more likely to be walking on grass like Adam and Eve did in the original paradise, the Garden of Eden.

So how does a person gain access to this new Garden of Eden. For this place is not for everyone on this earth. In fact, God has criteria for those who can enter this place. You might say, God has a "Private Property" or "No Trespassing sign outside of this Garden. The entrance requirement is Holiness. If God allowed unholy people into heaven, it would no longer be a Holy place. Well that presents a major problem. How many people here today have never said a bad word, done a bad deed, or thought an inappropriate thought. No one is raising their hand. If that is the case, this Garden must be empty of people. I mean even the Bible says, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." Just as an earthly garden needs someone to plant it and tend it, we need a Gardener, a Heavenly Father, to help us out. Well, let me tell you, He has helped us out. He has provided a path and way to the Heavenly Garden of Eden. It came about by the birth of a baby born in Bethlehem 2000 years ago. This Baby born in a lowly manger bed, is the rich owner of this universe. This baby nursed at his mother's breast opens his hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing. This baby appearing so weak and lowly can silence the winds and the rain. Yes, this baby is Jesus, who came to this earth to live the holy life we couldn't live, and to go to a cross to die an ugly death to make the payment for all the wrongs we have done. Jesus supplies us with the righteousness we need to stand before God. Jesus makes a whole and right again. Jesus is the one who safely takes us to this new Garden, this Eternal Garden. And the trip is totally a gift. We did nothing to merit it. Dan Jacobs is now in a much better Garden, where there are no crooked rows, put together by his son Brady, a Garden where he is truly relaxed and at peace. Dan is there simply because he believed in a Savior, named Jesus. Many of us know the passage, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one

and only son, that whoever believes in his should not perish, but have eternal life.”

So tell me more about this garden where Dan now resides. Our text says, “Behold I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.” The former things will not be remembered. Veterans who now carry with them the horrific images of war will no longer wake in the middle of the night because bomb blasts invaded their dreams again. All the dumb comments we’ve made, all the shameful and foolish things we did in our youth, none of those failings will come to mind ever again. What’s even better is that God won’t remember them! That’s why we don’t have to be afraid of Judgment Day. On that day God is not going to recount all the sins we’ve committed while everyone else listens. That file will be sealed and destroyed. In fact right now God constantly tosses the record of our sins into a vat of Jesus’ blood, as it were, where they dissolve like grains of salt in water.

Dan Jacobs isn’t going to remember the pain his cancer caused him, how he had to throw up again and again, how he had to have tubes put into his various parts of his body, and then have them yanked out. He won’t have those longing sad thoughts of wanting to have a whopper, or to have a piece of chicken at his benefit dinner, knowing that won’t be fulfilled. The sadness of not being able to eat a chicken dinner at Ivis’ in Sterling. The thought of a horrendous cancer infiltrating your body. Those thoughts are gone forever.

But what about loved ones that don’t end up on this new earth with Dan? Won’t he be sad when he thinks about them? Listen to what God said in our text: “I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more” (Isaiah 65:19). I don’t know how God is going to take away the sting of a loved one not being there on that new earth with us, but he will do that because there will be no sorrow on the new earth. Perhaps God will selectively erase our memory and it just won’t occur to us that a loved one is missing. Or, more probably, those memories won’t cause pain because our thoughts will be in total harmony with God’s thoughts. We will fully understand and rejoice at God’s righteous judgment as much as we’ll rejoice at his saving love.

Dan Jacobs was a man who was a great worker. He gave 150% to whatever he did. He was Mr. Fixit. His boss said, He was Extraordinary, a gentleman, never able to be replaced. His team leader even said that she still has his pager, and that anyone who gets it will have to be special. You could see his work ethic in how he dealt with his cancer. He did everything he could to beat the cancer to fix, what was broken. But you know, Dan couldn’t fix death. In fact, when he was told he was going to Brian’s House.. He said, “I’ll go along with that. S happens. A crude way of saying, death can’t be stopped, it happens. But Dan, death is not going to ever happen again for you. No more family members crying over your death. God expresses that truth in our text using a literary technique called litotes, or understatement. He proclaimed: “Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed” (Isaiah 65:20). There won’t be miscarriages, stillbirths, or fathers dying when their children are still toddlers. Sons and daughters won’t get killed in car accidents. There won’t be any of that because there won’t be any death. Isaiah assures us of this earlier in his book when he wrote: “On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever”.

Of course you already knew that there would be no more death in paradise. But there’s even more to look forward to. God says of that place: “No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. 23 They will not toil in vain”

(Isaiah 65:22, 23a). If you think that the new earth is going to be a place where we sit around and do nothing, think again. We will be working in the new world just as Adam and Eve were to work and care for the Garden of Eden. Only work won't be work. Every day there will be like the rare day here where everything clicks and you can't wait to get back into the office or workroom the next day. What exactly will we be doing? I imagine that the talents we have now will be carried over into that new world. Great musicians may keep producing great works of art. Those of you who are good organizers of people and events may keep doing that and you will love your work. You'll never be frustrated by those who don't return your calls or think that your ideas are dumb. Likewise you won't think the people you are working for are a burden. You'll live to serve them because you'll be perfect just as Jesus is perfect and lives to serve us.

Yes, we'll live in everlasting harmony with one another in that new world. God illustrates well that point when he says, "The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain" (Isaiah 65:25a). On the new earth, things will go back to the way they were meant to be. Animals (if in fact there will be animals on the new earth) will no longer tear each other apart like you see them do now on the Nature Channel. They'll live in harmony and so will we. No longer will we blame each other for our sins because there will be no more sin!

So, are you excited for the new earth? I hope so. But perhaps you're wondering how a text like this helps you face the dentist on Monday or get ready for that math test on Thursday? Studying this text is like circling your vacation days on your kitchen calendar. You do that, not because you'll forget to go on vacation otherwise, but as a motivational tool to keep you plugging away until then. When the shortened daylight hours lengthen your dark mood, it helps to flip ahead on the calendar and be reminded that in a month you'll be basking in the sunshine on Waikiki. Circling the dates of your trip to Hawaii may also motivate you to eat right and exercise so that you look good on the beach. In the same way reminding ourselves that we are headed to a better place will keep us from giving up on life or from getting wrapped up in this life so that we lose focus and direction.

Dan Jacobs was a man who had an even keel nature. He had a presence. When you were getting upset, he took charge and put things into perspective. Today he is taking charge once again, telling you he's just fine. Remember the road trips, the softball games and the fun we had with the cars, well my joy is even greater now. I left this earth with grace, dignity, and a smile that Jesus has put on my face. Good Morning! Yes it's a good morning! Dypes Defeats Death!